

Written / Non-Forms Reporting Requirements
For Information Collection Package (0572-0146)
(SEARCH)

Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households Program

This program is codified in 7 CFR Part 1774. The burden associated with this collection package are written/non-forms and forms. The written non-forms are described below. The forms have been uploaded into the IC List. Written non-forms and form are also described in Q. 2 of the Supporting Statement and listed in the Summary Burden Spreadsheet.

There are other forms used for this program and their burden are accounted for in other collection packages as identified in: (1) Q. 2 of the Supporting Statement; (2) Summary Burden excel spreadsheet; and (3) uploaded in ROCIS under the Supplementary Document section.

Written (Non-forms)

System for Award Management (SAM) Registration, General Certifications and Representations

At the time of application, each applicant must have an active registration in SAM before submitting its application in accordance with 2 CFR 25. This registration must remain current, accurate, and complete at all times during which the applicant has an active Federal award or an application under consideration.

Documentation of Income Survey

Income data used must accurately reflect the service area. If an adequate representation cannot be obtained through the American Community Survey the applicant may receive authorization from RUS to obtain an Income Survey, which is completed by an experienced and independent third-party. Dependent on the number of users, metrics are established to determine how many responses are needed for the survey to be accepted.

Environmental Report

Projects awarded through the SEARCH program may lead to the development of capital projects, which require several technical documents. All capital financed are subject to the National Environmental Protection Act, among other laws. As an eligible use of program funds, SEARCH grants may provide funding that allow for the creation of the environmental report (“ER”), which is prepared by a qualified party. To meet the Agency’s environmental regulations as set forth in 7 CFR 1790, applicants shall submit an environmental report for the geographical

area(s) proposed to be served by the SEARCH program. The following reports are all applicable to the SEARCH program: (30) CATEX – no report, (20) CATEX w/report, and (11) Environmental Assessments.

Preliminary Engineering Report

Projects awarded through the SEARCH program may lead to the development of capital projects, which require several technical documents. An eligible use of funds under the SEARCH program is the development of the preliminary engineering report (“PER”), which is prepared by a qualified engineer. The PER indicates areas to be served, scope and need of the project, cost estimate, annual operating expenses, etc. RUS Bulletin 1780-2, Preliminary Engineering Report, lists the topics and provides the organizational structure for the report. Once it is complete, if it is a part of the scope of the SEARCH award, the report is reviewed and approved by RD/RUS Engineering staff.

Feasibility Study

Projects awarded under the SEARCH program may lead to the creation of technical documents that are necessary to develop a capital project. Not in every instance is the applicant ready to proceed with a PER or ER, so a feasibility study or system assessment may be developed. Feasibility studies review the community’s needs, available technologies, and any barriers there may be to development. This document is often a first step toward the creation of a PER. Once it is complete, if it is a part of the scope of the SEARCH award, the report is reviewed and approved by RD/RUS Engineering staff.

Audits Based on Federal Assistance

Borrowers must submit audited financial statements annually in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and other governing regulations. 2 CFR 200 has been recently updated by the COFAR to provide updated guidance on modified reporting standards, which are being codified in the appropriate prevailing instructions and guidance.

Evidence of Other Funds

In the instance that funds are leveraged from other sources for projected authorized under this program, evidence of the availability of monies should be collected. There is no leveraging requirement, so this is only applicable in said instances.

Supporting Documentation

Applicants must provide documentation of legal organization and authority to borrow funds, construct, operate, manage the facility, etc. The documentation may include articles of incorporation, certificate of incorporation and good standing, bylaws, rules, and organizational minutes. Applicants also must provide financial information such as financial statements, audits, or existing debt instruments. This information is necessary for RUS to determine an organization's legal existence, authority to perform certain functions, and financial capacity to borrow funds.

Statement on availability to obtain credit elsewhere

Applicants must certify in writing that they are unable to finance the proposed project from their own resources or through commercial sources at reasonable rates and terms. The CONACT, as amended, requires the credit elsewhere analysis and statement. Form RUS Bulletin 1780-22, Eligibility Certification, may be used by borrowers.

Project Narrative

Applicants will provide a project narrative detailing the project to be financed with the SEARCH grant funds. The narrative will also provide details on the activities or tasks to be accomplished, objectives, timetables for task completion, and anticipated results.

Certifications for Contracts, Grants, and Loans (Regarding Lobbying):

Applicants must identify and report any known lobbying activity.

Certification regarding prohibited tying arrangements.

Applicants that provide electric service must provide the Agency a certification that they will not require users of a water or waste facility financed under this part to accept electric service as a condition of receiving assistance.

Statement Concerning Assistance Under the National Forest Service-Dependent Rural Communities Economic Diversification Act.

Applicants must contact the Forest Service and RUS to find out if any geographical or local areas have received grants for technical assistance to a forest-dependent rural community in a five-year period. SEARCH grant funds cannot be used to duplicate technical assistance provided to a forest-dependent rural community under the National Forest-Dependent Rural Communities

Economic Diversification Act of 1990. Applicants must submit documentation that such duplicate assistance has not been given.

Public Information/Evidence of Public Notice

Applicants must publish a notice of intent to file an application with RUS in a general circulation newspaper. Applicants also must conduct a public information meeting to allow public input into the proposed project when an election by the membership or public referendum is not required. They must provide RUS a copy of the published notice and minutes of the public meeting, which serve as documentation of the meeting.

Agreement for Engineering Services/Professional Services

Applicants must contract for the professional services rendered from an engineer, attorney, bond counsel, accountant, auditor, appraiser, or financial advisor. Contracts or other forms of agreement for services necessary for project planning and development are subject to RUS concurrence. Applicants must submit a narrative of the services to RUS for review and concurrence to ensure the needed services will be available at a reasonable cost.

Letter of Conditions

The Letter of Conditions is a narrative document that outlines all of the terms and conditions of the proposed award, which vary by project. The document is initially prepared by RUS/RD staff, however, each section is reviewed and concurred with the applicant's authorized representative. RUS Bulletin 1780-19, Water and Waste Letter of Conditions, provides the initial template.

Management Reports

All borrowers must furnish management reports that will provide management a means of evaluating prior decisions and serve as a basis for planning future operations and financial strategies. This requirement is necessary to help assure that the facility will be properly managed and to protect the financial interest of the Government.

Relationship or Association with RUS Employees

Applicants must identify and report any known relationship or association with a RUS employee such as close personal association, immediate family, close relatives, or business associates.

SF 3881 - ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form

This form is completed by both the grantee and their local banking representative. The form is executed by the local banking representative to confirm that the bank accounts that has been selected for the deposit of RUS monies is accurately represented and is an active account of the organization.